

SouthEast
Housing Co-operative

Housing Futures

SUMMER 2010

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HOT NEWS ZONE

*Wishing you a safe and
merry Christmas to all
from the board and staff.*

MEMBERS may comment on any article using the
comments button at www.sehc.org.au

You can post or fax to 9706 8558 or email to
dale.carroll@sehc.org.au. If you prefer to receive
your copy of *Housing Futures* by email please let
SouthEast know.

INCLUDED IN THIS MAIL OUT:

Support for Social Housing Tenants Brochure

**SouthEast Housing
Co-operative Ltd**
PO Box 7141,
Dandenong VIC 3175
Suite 16, 88–90 Walker St
Dandenong, VIC
Phone 03 9706 8005
Fax 03 9706 8558
www.sehc.org.au
Housing futures



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

DEAR MEMBERS,

Since the last newsletter the Board and staff have once again been very busy.

Staff and some Directors attended a Co-operative Identity workshop in Dandenong organised by the Co-operative Federation of Victoria and Chris Cooper from the Co-operative College England.

This was very informative and identified some important areas in particular marketing distinctive co-operative values and principles to members, managers, staff and the public. This falls in line with the member engagement item held over from the AGM to the next member forum.

Most of the AGM was taken up with one agenda item around the new leases. The remaining four items have been held over to the next General Meeting. The items are: the new strategic plan, member manual changes, director remuneration, and member engagement and will become the first items on the agenda.

There are still two positions vacant on the Board following the AGM; we had only one nomination on



the night. The Board would like to be able to fill the two positions, so if any member wishes to nominate please let the Board know. Any member nominating to the Board must pass police records and insolvency checks and attend a director induction session.

On behalf of the Board I would like to take this opportunity to wish all members and staff a very happy Xmas and a safe and prosperous New Year.

—Shirley Faram, Chairperson

NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITY HOUSING FEDERATION OF VICTORIA BULLETIN

WWW.CHFV.ORG.AU

CHFV is the peak body for community housing in Victoria. They exist to assist our agency.

CHFV has developed the following policy recommendations for 2011. They are being put to government.

ACTION 1

Grow the proportion of community housing stock to 35% of all social housing stock by 2014

ACTION 2

Release an appropriate level of State Government land to support the growth of community housing stock across Victoria

ACTION 3

Legislate fixed term planning approval periods for community housing applications

ACTION 4

Provide incentives at the local government level to create a development environment that supports the growth of community housing

ACTION 5

Mandate the requirement for affordable housing tenancy management accreditation to enable quality-assurance standards for tenancy management.

ACTION 6

Fully support the *One Million Homes* campaign

The campaign is to retrofit of one million Victorian concession card holder's homes over five years. The program wants to achieve energy efficiency improvements and water savings.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

FIRSTLY, my apologies to the membership. In the lead up to the AGM I circulated a draft of the 2009 AGM minute. I was thoroughly embarrassed to find out on the night there were two sets of minutes circulated. We have improved procedures now and this will not happen again. Again, my apologies for my error.

Some other activities SEHC has been involved in since the last newsletter are:

WORKING WITH OTHER HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES

We are communicating with other rental housing co-operatives to see how co-operatives can better co-operate with each other. Discussions have only just begun but this may be a way of improving services.

AUDIT

SEHC had a clean audit from Bentleys, our new and very thorough auditors.

REPORTING

SEHC has spent a very considerable amount of time meeting Consumer Affairs, DHS and the Housing Registrar.

INSPECTIONS

We are accompanying DHS in their inspections of the 150 properties DHS owns and SEHC manages. The updated information will form a maintenance plan to be developed with each other.

FINANCES

SEHC is budgeting to run at a \$192k surplus for the current financial year. Draft figures at November indicate that we are significantly ahead of budget. SEHC budgeted to be \$80k in surplus on 30 Nov but is actually \$104k in surplus.

Also, SEHC has \$2.69m in assets and \$0.62m in liabilities. This means we are worth \$2.07m. SEHC is in good financial shape.

CHRISTMAS WISHES

From all the staff, have we hope you have a delightful and fulfilling Christmas and New Year. We also wish everyone associated with SEHC a very positive 2011.

— Greg Flynn, SEHC General Manager



CO-OPERATIVE IDENTITY WORKSHOP

STAFF AND DIRECTORS attended a Co-operative Identity Workshop presented by Chris Cooper, of the United Kingdom Co-operative College, on 22 November 2010. The purpose of the workshop was twofold:

1. To introduce the distinctive nature of a *successful co-operative business* and the relevance of our co-operative values and principles to co-ops today.
2. To demonstrate how the application of the co-operative value mix can contribute to *improved organisational performance* and the achievement of a co-operative's strategic goals.

Nearly all the staff and half of the board attended the training.

The last session for the day focussed on applying values by marketing the co-operatives values and principles and asked the question: *How can I use Co-operative Values and Principles to market and drive my co-op forward to (i) members, (ii) managers (iii) staff and (iv) the public?*

SouthEast is developing a marketing plan and If you have suggestions on how to market our values and principles please call SouthEast on 9706 8005.

SouthEast's strategic plan identifies co-operative values as:

VALUES

The co-operative will practically, legally and ethically:

- Have an ongoing commitment to co-operative values and principles including training and education
- Meet the rights and needs of members as owners
- Be committed to good co-operative governance policies and practices
- Treat people with dignity and respect in all circumstances
- Practice honesty, transparency, innovation and safety in all its dealings.

CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

These values are based on seven core principles

- Voluntary and Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Member Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Education, Training and Information
- Cooperation among Co-operatives
- Concern for Community

ANDREA LEE – A PROFILE

I HAVE BEEN a tenant of SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd for the past 10 years and I served one term on the board in 2003/2004.

I am a single parent with three exhilarating but exhausting children who are now all in secondary education.

My eldest has just completed VCE and hopefully will obtain a placement at University, my middle daughter is starting VCE and my youngest son usually has his head stuck to some sort of gaming device, playing basketball or even feeding his face. It still amazes me how much teenage males can consume.

Since becoming a tenant with the co-op, I have re-educated and completed a Bachelor of Business at Swinburne University with a double major in

accounting and management. I have been employed in the business service sector and have dealt with small to medium businesses and individuals; meeting their accounting and taxation compliance needs and issues.



I really believe in the democracy of the co-operative and enjoy the benefits that we acquire as members. I am prepared for the additional time required for the continuing existence of our co-op, attending meetings to tackle and resolve the frequently growing compliance that we have to accomplish for the various government requests.

A MEMBER'S STORY

I FEEL SADDENED when I hear discussion among co-op members as happened all too frequently at member forums recently and reflect on what it was like for me before I was lucky enough to attain my membership.

I was on a disability pension when I fell pregnant with my daughter. My mother made it clear that although she loved me deeply, at her advanced age she would prefer I found alternate accommodation. My first share accommodation began well. I believed I had found sanctuary and a safe environment to deliver my baby. But it soon became clear that the fellow I had chosen to share with, although amiable, was an alcoholic and would drink and fall down comatose on a weekly basis. The house was dilapidated, (hence the affordable rent) and within a few months the owner decided to capitalise on his investment and knock it down.

My next foray into the private rental market was an old house in Hampton. The owner, a penny-pincher, was reluctant to do any maintenance on the property. I graphically remember the day when I had to scoop my daughter off the floor after I looked up at the ceiling after a bout of heavy rain and saw it sagging under

the heavy weight of the water and sparkling with blue flashes of electricity! Needless to say that after the house was completely rewired, the rent escalated and I could no longer afford to live there.

I then accepted to share with a male friend, but this too ended disastrously. Not only was I expected to do all the house-cleaning (including washing his industrial overalls), there was an imputation that I should grant him sexual favours as well!! Although I did not accede to his requests, the constant pressure was untenable.

By this time my mother and I had depleted our meagre funds fighting a succession of court battles for custody of my daughter. I was struggling to pay the rent and regularly went without food to pay the bills and ensure that my daughter was cared for. I remember the day my bank balance read -\$147 (overdrawn) and I appealed to my ex-partner's mother for some assistance. I also remember her response – that if I wasn't managing, she was quite happy to relieve me of my child! My anger acted a catalyst to spur me on.

Pretty soon afterwards my mother noticed a small advertisement in the local paper advertising the Co-op. We now have no fear of having to pack up and leave at regular intervals. I thank God every day that we have achieved those precious words, security of tenure.

— Anonymous

GRADUATION CELEBRATION OF MISSION AUSTRALIA'S TRADE ASSISTANTS.



SouthEast Tenant and member, Stephano Bol, second from right, was recently employed as a Greener Futures Trade's Assistant carrying out retrofits to save on energy costs in SouthEast managed properties.

SouthEast was very happy to learn that Stephano was accepted into the *Greener Futures* program and gained useful employment as a result. The work was short term and Stephano is seeking full time work. Stephano has experience helping people in the courts as a Court Network worker and as consultant to the International Organisation for Migrants and now as a trade's assistant. If you have a job to offer Stephano or can offer help in some way please call Stephano on 0433 030 966.



SENIORS AND DISABILITY RESEARCH PROJECT

SOUTHEAST is able to report project findings in the areas of disabilities, service satisfaction and survey results on the numbers who are open to accessing energy audits and information about local services.

The report findings indicate that 10 per cent of members living in SEHC managed accommodation are seniors (aged over 65) and 6 per cent of members have a disability. Of those seniors, almost half have one or more disabilities. Most of the disabled needs were either being provided by family members, private carers or independently.

SERVICE SATISFACTION

Members who are satisfied with the Service provided by SouthEast Housing Co-operative are much higher than those who are not happy with the service. This suggests that SEHC is doing great work in terms of service delivery and property management. Of those who responded to the question about satisfaction 21% (33 persons) of all tenants said they were satisfied and 1% (2 persons) unsatisfied.

ENERGY AUDITS AND INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL SERVICES

Most of the tenants would allow an energy and safety check to be conducted in and around their homes, but only if they are informed in advance about the service. Also, many tenants would like information sent to them about local services including support services.

Below: Estimated number of those who would allow an energy and safety check and those who would like information sent to them about local services.

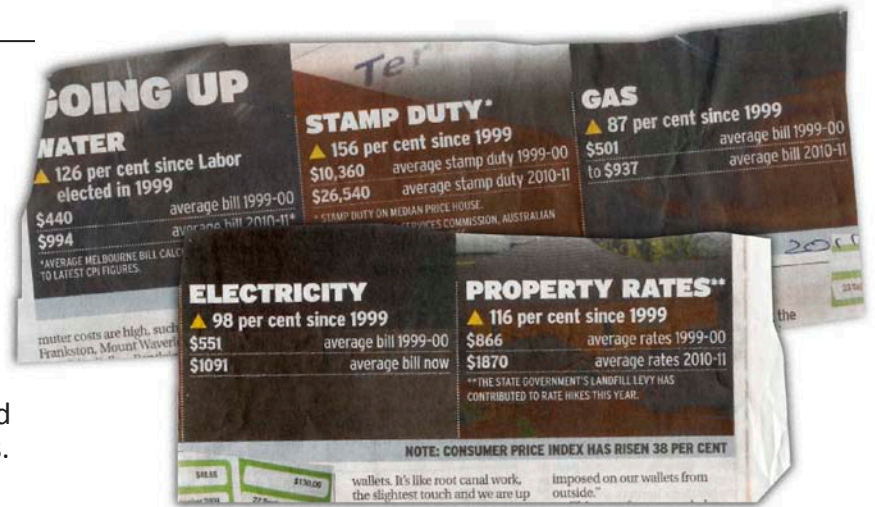
	Number
Energy And Safety Check	29
Information About Local Services	40

Tenants would like to be more aware about the local services and sustainable energy products. If tenants are provided with information about local services, they are more likely to feel secure because they would be better informed about services in their area.

UTILITIES COSTS – HOW TO SAVE BIG DOLLARS

ENVIRONMENTAL OPTIONS

SEHC will be running a workshop on environmental matters relating to housing in April 2011. Given that utility costs are significantly increasing a planned focus will be on how tenants as consumers can manage energy and appliance use and what steps might be taken to make tenants dwellings more energy efficient. This will include information on how to deal with water and energy companies and how to access financial counselling resources.



ENVIRONMENT VICTORIA'S FESTIVE SEASON GUIDE

How to make yours a happy green holidays

It really is the season to be jolly. It's the rare time of year where after a long year of slogging it out we enjoy kicking back, spoiling others and eating ourselves silly! And we deserve to. But with all the waste that goes along with it, it's not such a joyous time for our environment.

So this handy guide will help you hold onto the good bits of the silly season, while being a little gentler on the planet. It's still about having a great time with plenty of food and presents, but without all the waste. Because when you remember what your priorities are, it's actually surprisingly easy.

Download the entire Festive Season Guide from

<http://www.environmentvictoria.org.au/content/festive-season-guide>

The following is an extract from the guide:

DECORATIONS

Let's kick off with some handy decorating hints. Because there's nothing like a Chrissie tree or a splash of sparkle to get you into the spirit!

THE TREE

We know... it's hard to imagine a Christmas without the tree. So here are a few tips that will help you have your tree and love it too:

- Instead of buying a fresh pine tree, why not use a large potted plant that you have around the house. These can make great Christmas trees which you can use year after year. And if they do get old and tatty, you can recycle them into compost, unlike plastic trees

- How about buying a native plant from your local nursery. They're better for the eco-system than pines grown in plantations and sprayed with chemicals. Plus, you could plant it when you're done, and keep the local birds happy
- What about a tree made from an old paperback book? OK... so this will be teeny-weeny, but cute all the same!
- Or of course, if you must have a real tree (no judging eyebrows here!) then make sure you get one from a sustainable grower. And after the big day either replant it in your own garden (see tip one!) or recycle it. Many local councils run recycling schemes so keep a look out for yours

LIGHTS

We all like a little sparkle around this time. So here are our tips for keeping your energy use and power bill right down:

- If you have lights from previous years obviously check them to see if they're still working and safe. But if you're in the market for new ones buy good quality LED lights. They'll use heaps less electricity than conventional globes and last ten times longer
- Make sure you turn them off before hitting the hay or use a timer. Don't worry kids – Santa will still know where to deliver the prezzies!
- Sign up for 100% GreenPower. Getting government accredited GreenPower will cut the greenhouse gas emissions from your home's electricity use to virtually zero for only a couple of dollars extra a week. Now that's one good deal!

FROM THE DHS VICTORIAN STATE CONCESSIONS WEBSITE:

UTILITIES RELIEF GRANT SCHEME (including the non-mains utility relief grant scheme)

The utility relief grant scheme and the non-mains utility relief grant scheme provides assistance for domestic customers who are unable to pay their utility bills due to a temporary financial crisis.

Assistance may be provided to low-income households suffering a short-term (within last 12 months) financial crisis who are unable to pay for a current utility account or LP gas account and who are at risk of disconnection, restriction of supply, or non-supply of gas bottles.

You must hold at least one of the following concession cards:

- Pensioner Concession Card
- Health Care Card
- DVA Gold Card

Cards marked 'dependent' are not eligible

You need to demonstrate that unexpected hardship has left you seriously short of money so that you cannot pay your utility bills without assistance and risk disconnection or non-supply, and meet one of the following criteria:

- A significant increase in usage
- A recent decrease in income, for example, loss of employment
- High unexpected expenses on essential items
- The cost of shelter is more than 30% of the household income
- The cost of utility usage is more than 10% of the household income

SPECIAL CONDITIONS FOR NON-CONCESSION CARD HOUSEHOLDS

The account holder must be registered with their utility company's hardship program and the household's income must be no more than the equivalent to the Commonwealth maximum income rate for part age pensioners. (Information can be obtained from the Centrelink publication A Guide to Australian Government Payments)

HOW TO APPLY

Application forms for the Non-Mains Utility Relief Grant Scheme can be obtained by calling the Concessions Information Line on 1800 658 521.

Application forms for the Utility Relief Grant Scheme can be obtained from your gas, electricity and water companies. Your application should provide in detail the circumstances that have led to your inability to pay the outstanding account.

UPCOMING MEETINGS 2011

MEMBERS wishing to attend board meetings may do so in writing to the chairperson, preferably two weeks in advance, and identifying any agenda items they wish to raise. Normally there are no meetings in January.

These dates are tentative and should be confirmed by members wishing to attend.

Meetings normally begin at 10:30am and Board meetings are held at Heritage Hill located at: 66 McCrae Street, Dandenong VIC 3175. (03) 9793 4511. Both the Governance and Policy and Business Development Committees meet at the SouthEast office.

BOARD MEETINGS

Feb 25	June 24	October 28
March 25	July 29	AGM November 14
April 29	August 26	November 25
May 27	September 30	December 16

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Governance and Policy Committee usually meet every 1st Friday of the month.

The Business Development Committee usually meet every 3rd Tuesday of the month.

The Audit Committee meet as required.

MY COUNTRY

DOROTHEA MACKELLAR, pictured right, wrote the wonderful poem *My Country*. (Reproduced with permission)

The love of field and coppice,
Of green and shaded lanes.
Of ordered woods and gardens
Is running in your veins,
Strong love of grey-blue distance
Brown streams and soft dim skies
I know but cannot share it,
My love is otherwise.

I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror -
The wide brown land for me!

A stark white ring-barked forest
All tragic to the moon,
The sapphire-misted mountains,
The hot gold hush of noon.
Green tangle of the brushes,
Where lithe lianas coil,
And orchids deck the tree-tops
And ferns the warm dark soil.

Core of my heart, my country!
Her pitiless blue sky,
When sick at heart, around us,
We see the cattle die -
But then the grey clouds gather,
And we can bless again
The drumming of an army,
The steady, soaking rain.

Core of my heart, my country!
Land of the Rainbow Gold,
For flood and fire and famine,
She pays us back threefold -
Over the thirsty paddocks,
Watch, after many days,
The filmy veil of greenness
That thickens as we gaze.

An opal-hearted country,
A wilful, lavish land -
All you who have not loved her,
You will not understand -
Though earth holds many splendours,
Wherever I may die,
I know to what brown country
My homing thoughts will fly.

